



ASSOCIATION CATHOLIQUES  
CANADIENNE DE LA SANTÉ

CATHOLIC HEALTH  
ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

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## CHAC issues a position statement on advance directives

There is great potential in the use of advance directives for improving communication between individuals, families and caregivers concerning end-of-life issues and for empowering individuals to make health care decisions, says the Catholic Health Association of Canada (CHAC).

“If advance directives assist individuals to reflect more thoughtfully about end-of-life issues and to communicate their wishes effectively, then the process of preparing an advance directive can be worthwhile and helpful,” the CHAC said in a position statement released today. The Association sees an important role to play for health care institutions in educating patients, residents and caregivers about the importance of effective communication and about the use and implications of advance directives.

The position statement, however, also raises a number of concerns about the use of advance directives. It stresses the difficulties involved in preparing and interpreting them. The Association is also concerned that too much reliance on advance directives could tend to reinforce the impersonal and institutional nature of health care and to establish a legal model which can dominate the relationship between individuals and caregivers.

“Given these complexities, the CHAC is concerned that the very goal of advance directives to enable persons to direct the type of life-sustaining treatment they wish to receive could be frustrated.”

The adoption of advance directives must not pre-empt efforts to personalize the delivery of health care and to create a situation in which caregivers, family members and friends are aware of a person’s wishes and values and can make informed and sensitive health care decisions on her/his behalf, the CHAC said.

The Association welcomes the comments of members and the public relating to the use of advance directives and ways of improving their implementation.